

Community

A young boy battling cancer is embraced by a baseball team and community.

By Gary Weckselblatt

The Quakertown Community High School baseball team did a wonderful thing Thursday night. The group of young men helped organize a community effort that truly exemplified the critical role of public education in today's society.

They did it on behalf of 7-year-old Cam Wakeley, a delightful boy who's been dealt a difficult hand as he's being treated for Ewing's Sarcoma. It's brutalized his early years and has certainly taken a toll on his loving family. His mom has bravely documented the struggle in a dignified way on her Cam's Corner Facebook page.

Prior to its Cam Night game with Pennridge, the team sold "Cam Strong" T-shirts and collected donations to defray Cam's medical costs. Faculty and staff took part in a dress down day and money was collected at the game. Pennridge, the Panthers' worthy opponent, also played a role, selling T-shirts in their school colors, and each coach and player shook Cam's hand before the contest.

Richland Police Chief Richard J. Ficco Sr. watched the game from the stands and saw the pregame ceremonies, in which Cam threw out the first pitch. Quakertown Police Officer Bob Lee presented a



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\$200 check to Cam from the Shop With A Cop program Officer Lee helped to organize.

The emotional spark, however, ignites from a coach who teaches life lessons to his players. For Cam's benefit, it's happened with Kurt Handel's wrestlers, George Banas's football team, and now Jonathan Pallone's baseball squad. Their players are taught that life isn't only fun and games, and the teenage student-athletes have learned to be selfless and come together in support of something bigger than themselves.

"You see them," Mr. Pallone said of his players. "They're really feeling it. They get as much out of it as Cam does. This means a lot to them."

The coach also credits the players' parents for raising their children the right way. "This is a great community," he said.

When you look at the photos, you can't help but notice the admiration Cam has for his big brothers. In truth, the players have seen that their younger buddy is the true hero.

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